

A young girl with brown hair and a headband is sitting on a grassy lawn, pointing her right index finger at the screen of a laptop. The laptop is open and its screen is dark. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting with green grass and some foliage. The girl is wearing a pink and yellow striped shirt.

# Growing Up Digital

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Bite Sized Thought Piece  
**2013**

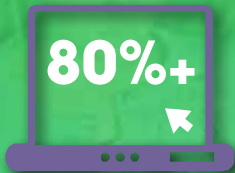
## LEISURE TIME IS CHANGING FOR KIDS

Long gone are the days when playing out on the street for hours each day was the norm, the TV was flicked on occasionally and playing games meant getting out the Monopoly board. But how much have new devices influenced kids' leisure time and what does it mean for you and your brand?

Over recent years the home has become the preferred site for leisure time, partially influenced by an increase in technology devices available.

Watching TV remains the most frequent leisure activity undertaken by children; however, gaming and internet use continue to rise among this group (Ofcom- Children's Media Use 2012).

With over 80% of 5-15 year olds now using the internet at home (Ofcom- Children's Media Use 2012), the online world is no longer a mystery to this age group; it is a skill-forming, social experience essential to a child's development in a digitally focused world.



**80%+ of 5-15 year olds are now using the internet at home**

**Rise of tablets use in households with children**





## TABLETS: THE GAME CHANGER

Use of tablets in households with children has risen dramatically in the past year from just 15% in July 2012 to 42% in July 2013 (MediaCT Tech Tracker), but what makes a tablet so appealing to children and families?

Children as young as one year old are now interacting with mobiles and tablets, the advantages for parents being clear; a boredom buster for those long car journeys, quiet time in a restaurant and that Peppa Pig fix whenever, wherever. However, mobile technology can be so much more than a 24-hour a day entertainer.

The basic functionality and intuitive nature of touch screen technology enables opportunities for very young children to interact and learn before more advanced motor skills develop. At such an exploratory stage in their development, when they are 'mapping in' basic experiences, this engagement with technology gives them the power to change the way they interact with the world not just now but later in life.

For children aged 3-7 the power of the mobile and tablet are clear – they offer an interactive world that feeds their growing imaginations. Engaging content gives them the chance to interact deeper into fantastical worlds and identify with characters in this.

As children progress into later stages of development they start to develop their social identity, first conforming with peers and later learning to express their own, independent, thoughts and opinions. At this stage their tablet experiences are likely to be used for development and affirmation of their role in their social groups.

## **NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEEPER ENGAGEMENT...**

We know that many kids form strong attachments with characters and franchises and want to engage with them in multiple ways. Those of us who are

parents will know the lure of character merchandise – learning phonics becomes far more appealing to little ones if it is with a Disney Princess and the chance to put on Mike the Knight pyjamas can convince a child it is time to get dressed for bed.

In this new media landscape thousands of possibilities are opening up for kids to engage with their favourite characters and brands in innovative, cost-effective ways whenever and wherever they like. Brands have the chance to shape kids digital experiences and make the most of the opportunities this new world provides.



When speaking to kids, we see how traditional media can work to create initial engagement, but experiences beyond this can help form stronger attachments with brands, characters and franchises. New digital devices offer a chance for brands to deepen engagement, creating closer affinity with characters and franchises. Touch-screen technology and interactive content has the power to pull kids deeper into the world the brands create for them. Kids want to be active players in these new worlds; they want to have a sense of ownership over content.

## INVESTING IN THE RIGHT DIGITAL EXPERIENCES FOR KIDS

However, just having a presence on tablets is not enough for brands. Kids are demanding consumers - they want a quality experience that stays true to their faith in brands. The best digital experiences brands can provide are those that meet the needs of kids at different stages in their development – from developing motor skills, stimulating imaginations to helping understand their place in the world. It is important for brands to understand these needs and







test new ideas and content to ensure products are pitched at the right level.

We also know that parents care deeply about the effect of screen-time on their kids and will monitor the time kids spend on digital devices. If brands get it right, parents will see that digital interactions can help inspire, socialise and educate their kids. This is the holy grail of digital experiences: interactions that enthuse kids and feel valuable to parents.

Finally, it is worth noting that this is not a static environment - the landscape is also rapidly changing and kids are likely to be at the forefront of this. Understanding how kids use new technologies to meet their needs will be vital for forward thinking brands to adapt. Getting in touch with kids and observing how they interact with new devices and content will give brands the best chance of thriving in this brave new world.

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